

Houston Health

Fall 2001

Houston Department of
Health and Human Services



A Quarterly Newsletter for Advisory Councils of the Houston Department of Health and Human Services

Lyons marks 50 years of service

Lyons Avenue Health Center, the first City of Houston clinic, celebrates its 50th birthday in November. And just in time, it is getting a gift that will help it grow.

An expansion project set to begin early next year will provide the health center with an additional 3,200 square feet of space, remodeled service areas and the ability to increase its current patient average of 1,600 per month.

Although Lyons opened its doors at its current site in the Fifth Ward at the corner of Lyons Avenue and Lockwood Drive in 1951, the health center actually began providing services two years earlier at Julia C. Hester House, a local community center. City health services prior to 1949 were provided from City Hall and the old Jefferson Davis Hospital.

Lyons is an important part of Houston's history. It was the first city clinic and preventive health care facility intended to serve the residents of Fifth Ward and Denver Harbor, communities predominantly African-American and Hispanic respectively.

Remembering Lyons' early days always compels area residents to think about immunizations, said Gloria McNeil, RN, the center's administration manager for the last 20 years.

"Immunizations are a reference point for the community," she said. "The residents say we literally had



Lyons Avenue Health Center opened its doors in 1951, becoming the first City of Houston clinic. The facility, which serves the Fifth Ward and Denver Harbor communities, will celebrate its anniversary in November.

immunization lines around the entire building and down the street. They always talk about their shots. Sure, if you get specific and ask more in-depth questions, they talk about our other services, but immunizations defined Lyons."

Well-child and maternity were the other services offered when Lyons opened.

The staff consisted of a nursing supervisor, eight public health nurses, one secretary and two janitors. Lyons in those days provided an early version of case management, sending nurses into the community to deliver an array of services in the residents' homes. Those services included parenting classes, nutrition, adult wellness, newborn and developmental

screenings and referrals to social service programs, Lyons or local hospitals.

By the mid 1960s, additional programs established by the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) at Lyons also addressed health concerns related to tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases and dental care. The facility, expanded to 17,780 square feet in 1976, for a time also housed the department's Consumer Health (food inspection services), the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and Environmental Health Services.

Today, aside from the three initial services and those added in the 1960s, preventive health care at

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Lyons also encompasses family planning, prenatal check-ups, pregnancy testing, pap smears, nutrition, health education, speech and hearing services, as well as newborn, lead, vision and blood pressure screenings. A similar scope of service is offered by the department's six other health centers.

Historically, Lyons has served as a pilot health center for new programs. Piloted programs include Baby Buddy, a public and private collaboration to encourage early prenatal care, and the I.C.E.S. Project, a computerized system intended to create an immunization database across the state. Another initiative tested at Lyons was the Program to Integrate Eligibility Screening (PIES), a program sponsored by HDHHS, the Harris County Hospital District and the Texas Department of Human Services to increase health care accessibility for pregnant women.

The Lyons Avenue Health Center Advisory Council has been active for most of the last 20 years. The council formed in January of 1979 under Charlene Hunter-James, former Lyons administrator and now chief of the Houston/Harris County Area Agency on Aging. It was inactive briefly and restarted in January of 1982 under the new administrator, McNeil. Former council leaders include Mattie Blackshear, Angie Bell Ratcliff and Nellie Joyce Punch from 1984 to present.

Next year's expansion project calls for remodeling of the TB Clinic, doubling the size of the Medical Records area, enlarging the STD Clinic, separating Immunizations and Family Planning to give each their own areas, adding a new employee lounge and building a 100-seat auditorium with its own public en-



Diane Mares and her son Kenneth Mares receive a fingerprinting kit from Houston Police Department officers Tomeka Hawkins and Vicky Miller during a child safety health fair organized by Lyons Avenue Health Center as part of its 50th anniversary celebration. Lyons is coordinating a series of health fairs as a 50-day countdown to an anniversary ceremony on November 16.

trance. Lyons will also get landscaping, exterior benches and tables, a new parking lot on the west side of the building and directional signs that will be uniform throughout the health center.

"The expansion will enhance our health education efforts," McNeil said.

The community will be able to gather in the auditorium to take advantage of health education programs ranging from brown-bag lunches and presentations to workshops and lecture series. The separate entrance will permit the scheduling of events after clinic hours or on weekends when the health center is closed.

The new employee lounge will connect the auditorium to the rest of facility and function as additional meeting space where food can be served to participants of the educational programs.

"When talking about the goals of public health, one of the words you continually hear is education," McNeil

said. "That's because it is of utmost importance to make sure people can take care of themselves. They can only do that with information.

"People should have enough information to know the value of breast-feeding, the value of hygiene, the value of safe sex, etc. But they also need to know how to obtain that information. For example, they should know how to get a referral for orthopedic care if they have a foot problem. They need to know how to look up resources."

Lyons' expansion and renovation will complement the area's revitalization currently in progress. Already, a new pharmacy and a bank have opened near the health center and there are plans to build decorative arches at Lyons Avenue and Lockwood Drive.

"There is a lot of pride in the community so we have a responsibility to become a more attractive building," McNeil said.

Ceremony to observe Lyons' 50th anniversary

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services will observe Lyons Avenue Health Center's 50th anniversary on November 16 with a public ceremony to announce an expansion and renovation project.

The ceremony is scheduled at 10 a.m. at the health center, 5602 Lyons Avenue. An open house, including tours and light refreshments, will

follow the ceremony.

Community leaders and residents who have obtained health services at the health center through the years have been invited to be part of the program.

The health center began sponsoring a series of health fairs for its patients on October 1 as a 50-day countdown to the anniversary cere-

mony. Health fairs organized to date have focused on child safety, childhood lead poisoning prevention, dental health, the Baby Net and Baby Buddy programs, prenatal care and sexually transmitted diseases. Other health fairs scheduled will focus on infectious diseases, immunizations and an overview of services offered at Lyons.

HDHHS to open two new multi-service centers

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) conducted ribbon-cutting ceremonies in October for two new multi-service centers opening in Denver Harbor and Third Ward.

The Denver Harbor Multi-Service Center is located at 6402 Market Street and the Third Ward Multi-Service Center is at 3611 Ennis Street.

"The goal of the multi-service centers is to offer residents access to a comprehensive mix of services close to their homes," said Jules Dedeaux, division manager of multi-service center operations at HDHHS.

Multi-service centers (MSC) gather a number of fragmented social services and a variety of agencies into a single facility that is easily accessible to the community. Agencies within the center collaborate to ensure that services are delivered effectively and conveniently.

The new facilities will bring the total number of HDHHS multi-service centers to nine.

Dedeaux said the department is finalizing contracts with various agencies that provide nutrition services, youth programs, senior citizen activities, family counseling, child and adult day care, drug and alcohol abuse counseling and other support activities. Services are expected to begin in early November.

The Denver Harbor MSC will open with only the first floor completed. The second floor will be

completed next year, increasing the facility's space to 58,500 square feet. When completed, it will accommodate 10 to 12 agencies. A gymnasium will offer recreational programs coordinated by the city's Parks and Recreation Department.

The Third Ward MSC will focus on providing child care and senior services. It includes a 400-seat auditorium, a feature designed to attract lectures and other similar events to

the community.

In addition to the child care and senior services, the 35,000 square-foot Third Ward facility will house three or four agencies.

Both centers have multi-purpose space available for rent by community groups for meetings, banquets, receptions, seminars or workshops. The space will be available to non-profit groups at discounted rates.



The Denver Harbor MSC, 6402 Market Street, (top photo) will feature a gymnasium and house about a dozen social service agencies. The Third Ward MSC, 3611 Ennis, will focus on child care and senior services.

Preventing falls part of healthy aging for seniors

Helping the elderly reduce falls begins with making homes safer.

Most falls occur during everyday activities in the home, especially on stairs and in kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms.

"Falls can result in many kinds of hardships for seniors," said Koyne Smith, a benefits counselor with the Houston/Harris County Area Agency on Aging at the Houston Department of Health and Human Services.

"They can lead to financial woes because of health care-related costs, reduce a senior's ability to live independently, cause great suffering during convalescence and result in disabilities."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one of every three people 65 years and older falls each year in the United States. CDC statistics also indicate that the elderly are hospitalized for fall-related injuries five times more often than they are for injuries from other causes and that falls are the leading cause of injury deaths among people 65 years and older.

Among older adults, fractures are the most serious health outcomes associated with falls. The most common are fractures of the hip, pelvis, femur, vertebrae, humerus, hand, forearm, leg and ankle. Approximately 250,000 hip fractures occur each year in the United States among people over age 65.

Precautions in the home can substantially cut the risk of falling:

- Make sure there is a clear walkway through every room. It is a good idea to remove from walkways such tripping hazards as books, clothes, shoes and extension cords. Objects out of their usual place may be overlooked and cause a person to trip.
- Remove or replace rugs and runners that tend to slip or attach



Installing handrails along stairs is one of the many precautions that will make homes safer for senior citizens.

a non-slip backing. Also, tack down the edges of all carpets. Use non-slip mats in the bathtub or on shower floors.

- Always use a sturdy step stool to prevent a fall while retrieving items stored in high places. Store frequently-used items in easy to reach cabinets. A chair should not be used as a step stool. If a chair must be used, select a sturdy one with a wide seat and a high back (placed in front of you).
- Install grab bars or handrails in the bathtub area or shower and next to the toilet. Install easy-to-grasp handrails along stairs and use them even if the steps are easy to climb. Carry loads that are small enough not to block your vision or prevent you from freeing up a hand for the railing.
- Wear non-slip, low-heeled shoes or slippers that fit snugly.
- Good lighting can prevent many

falls. Install night-lights in the bedroom, bathroom and hallways. Make sure that light switches are accessible from the top and bottom of a stairway.

- Wipe up spills immediately.

Some medicines have side effects such as dizziness, drowsiness or fatigue, placing seniors at a greater risk of falling. It is recommended that seniors ask a doctor or pharmacist to review their medications.

Poor vision increases the chances of falling. Vision checks should be scheduled at least once a year.

Exercise improves muscle flexibility and strength, helps with balance and coordination and is recommended for those with osteoporosis. It is best to consult with a doctor before starting an exercise program.

For more information, call the Houston/Harris County Area Agency on Aging at 713-794-9001.

Food impacts quality of life during senior years

“You are what you eat.”

The catch phrase is a popular reminder that food can have a profound effect on a person’s quality of life. The saying becomes even more important during the senior years because eating habits and exercise levels may need adjusting in order to maintain a high quality of life.

Generally, older adults require fewer calories due to lower energy needs. They also may be trying to reduce sodium, sugar or cholesterol, impacting what they are able to eat.

The elderly need the same nutrients as younger people, but in different amounts. The key nutritional components that should be included on a daily basis include:

Energy

As people age, the body uses energy at a slower rate and many seniors live less active lifestyles requiring less energy intake. Depending upon activity level, the average caloric requirement is around 1,600 calories daily. The following daily servings add up to about 1,600 calories: bread group, six servings; vegetable group, three servings; fruit group, two servings; dairy group, two servings and meat group, two servings. Use fats and oils sparingly.

Protein

Protein, needed for body tissue maintenance and muscle building, is an important component of a healthy diet. Older adults need at least five ounces, or two servings, of protein a day. For some seniors, protein-rich foods like meat may be hard to chew or too expensive to buy. Below are some recommendations for protein consumption:

- Choose tender cuts of meat, chicken, turkey or ground meat.
- Have teeth, gums and dentures checked regularly. If chewing is a problem, include dairy products. Milk, cheese and yogurt also supply protein.



- If money is an issue, stretch meat, poultry and fish in casserole dishes or eat them in small portions. Consider other, less expensive protein sources such as eggs, beans and peanut butter.

Calcium

Calcium intake should increase as adults age. Maintaining bone mass is very important in reducing the risk of weakening or thinning bones, which may account for falls and broken bones. Prevention, using a diet rich in calcium, should be a key concern in maintaining mobility and flexibility during the senior years.

Both men and women over age 50 should consume at least 1,200 milligrams of calcium each day. Milk, cheese and yogurt are the best sources. In addition, dark green leafy vegetables, fish with edible bones, tofu, fortified fruit juice and cereals also have significant amounts of calcium. Consuming enough vitamin D along with some weight-bearing exercise are all important in maintaining bone mass.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D and calcium go hand-in-hand. Vitamin D helps deposit calcium in bones and also

helps protect against bone disease by keeping bones strong. Twenty to 30 minutes of sun exposure two to three times per week is adequate to get all the vitamin D needed. For those who are home-bound, Vitamin D can be obtained from foods. Most milk and cereals are fortified with vitamin D. Check the food label to be sure.

Iron and Vitamin C

Iron deficiency is a common nutritional problem in the elderly and often leads to anemia. Fatigue, weakness and the inability to concentrate are common symptoms associated with anemia.

Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron from plant sources. Including vitamin C with iron-rich foods will enhance the body’s ability to absorb iron.

Tips for obtaining adequate iron and vitamin C:

- Choose iron-enriched cereals, beans, whole-grains, lean meat and poultry.
- Include a vitamin C-rich fruit or juice with meals.
- Add a little meat, poultry, fish or dried beans to pasta or rice dishes.

Other Nutrients

Vitamin A, folate, vitamin B-12 and zinc are other nutrients that are important in maintaining overall health and fitness. Including a wide variety of foods from the “Food Guide Pyramid” will provide these additional nutrients in abundance.

Nutritional needs and activity levels are different for each person. Eating a wide variety of foods, drinking ample fluids, especially water, and keeping physically active can promote improved health and well-being throughout a person’s life.

*Compiled by
HDHHS Nutrition staff*

Child lead poisoning triggers adverse effects

Lead poisoning is the number one environmental hazard faced by children today. Lead poisoning in children reduces intelligence (IQ), causes learning disabilities and affects a child's attention span.

A recent study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that drug therapy does not reverse the adverse effects in children with elevated blood lead levels. The patients in the studies did not show any improvement in their IQ after drug treatment.

Lead poisoning can affect every system in the human body, but is especially harmful to the brain and nervous system. Environmental lead exposure is associated with an increased prevalence of tooth decay in the U.S. population according to a recently published article by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Fetuses exposed to lead are born with low birth weight. An article in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* links lead poisoning to disruptive behaviors as well as attention deficit disorder in children.

Based upon these findings, the prevention of blood lead poisoning is extremely important. Screening for blood lead is the strongest tool at hand. Screening allows the medical provider to obtain further testing to reach a diagnosis and to inform



parents about prevention measures. In addition, treatment can be initiated, as appropriate, to prevent further damage.

Lead is a serious threat to the healthy physical and mental development of children, particularly those who have lived in high-risk communities.

In Houston, the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program has recognized 10 zip codes where children appear to be at higher risk for lead poisoning. They are: 77003, 77004, 77007, 77009, 77011, 77019, 77020, 77023, 77026 and 77028. Other sectors of the city of Houston and the region may not be lead-free, but do not, to our knowledge, meet all five risk factors.

The five factors that suggest higher lead poisoning risks are:

- historical prevalence of lead poisoning

- high-risk age group (one and two years of age)
- poverty status
- age of housing (pre-1950)
- racial and ethnic minority status.

National Lead Poison Awareness Week is observed October 21-27.

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services offers free lead screenings to children between six months and 6 years of age at all of its health centers.

For more information, call 713-794-2995.

*By Brenda Reyes, MD, MPH
Program Administrator
Childhood Lead Poison
Prevention Program*

Lead Hazards

Children can be harmed by lead by:

- Getting lead dust from old paint on their hands or toys and then putting their hands in their mouths
- Inhaling lead dust from old paint
- Eating chips of old paint or dirt that contain lead
- Drinking water from pipes lined or soldered with lead

Where can lead be found?

- Dust and paint chips from old paint
- Homes built before 1978, particularly those that are in need of repair or are in deteriorating condition
- Soil contaminated by buildings nearby
- Hobby materials such as stained glass, paints, solders, fishing weights and buckshot
- Folk remedies
- Workplace dust brought home on the clothing of people who have jobs that use lead.
- Pottery
- Mini-blinds manufactured outside the country before July 1996.

Houston Health Newsletter

is published quarterly by the

Houston Department of Health and Human Services

8000 N. Stadium Dr., Houston, Texas 77054

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